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OF INTEREST TO WOMEN.

Conducted by HESTER M. POOLE.

MY LADY'S SUMMER HALL.

THE old Dutch fashion of bisecting the front door of a summer cottage is exceedingly attractive. In imagination one can see a lithe young form, quaintly clad in clinging drapery, standing in such a half-opened doorway. Silhouetted against the shadows of the interior, and framed in a wealth of climbing roses or woodbine, she seems a living picture in an antique setting.

As she lightly steps aside, we enter from the broad, low rustic porch. Here we find that our little lady has fitted up a hall as far removed from the traditional bleak, narrow, unattractive passage-way as she herself is removed from stiff, conventional Shakerdom.

The flooring, of narrow matched boards, waxed and polished until the lights and shadows play over it as over the surface of a mirror, is kept as immaculately as my lady's wardrobe, and she tells us how this is done, for, in the woman of to-day, beauty is grafted on the sturdy stock of practical life. After the door is once perfectly covered with "wood filler," or with that turpentine and wax which is procured already prepared, she simply has it rubbed over every week with a soft long-handled brush, or with soft woolen rags.

Over the dado of sized and stenciled burlaps, dull, mossy green and Indian red, rises the solid wall of the same color, only a paler, duller tint than that. Light, sifting in diamond shapes, through the pale amber and rosy hues of the door panes, plays softly upon a large plaque of hammered brass, a head of Diana, forever young and beautiful. Below, and near the door, is an inviting settle, long and dark and polished with many a rubbing. On it extends an untufted cushion of burlaps, Indian red and green, while the chest formed by the seat is a receptacle for such wraps as are needed on rainy days.

"Had I an old, railed-back wooden seat," said my lady, "or even an unused ironing-table, I could have made either into a hall settle. Sand-paper, enamel, here and there a line of gilt, and a cushion, and presto, the thing is done, yet where one can have the right thing new, it is so satisfactory, you know."

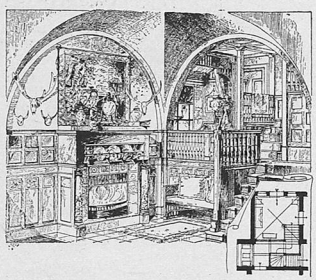
"My hall is a reception-room, as well—of course it is. What is drearier than the dark, dark, straight hall that seemed fit entrance to a series of dungeons, *Nous avons changeon tout de cela.*"

"You see the hall is broad, but the stairway went straight up to the second floor, instead of taking itself out of the way to the right or the left, as a well-conducted hall ought to do. Our remedy was to throw a grille over from the stair-foot to the opposite wall, and to hang therefrom a burlap portière. As the story is low, I rejected an all-over stenciled surface in favor of solid Indian red, with an arabesque perpendicular bordering it as you see. This, you know, accentuates the height. Tints of yellow deepening to amber relieve the sombre color, and repeat the lights playing over the surface of yonder plaque."

We took in all the harmonious whole. In the corner between the settle and the doorway stood—not the stereotyped stiff India rubber plant, impossible of grace, but a palm, whose exquisite curves reminded you of the lines of water falling from a height, of swaying boughs, and all things lithe and free. The stand re-echoed in a stronger way the curvings of the palm, in hammered iron, and the large jar which held it was of a dull and grayish green. Nothing interfered with the perfect harmony.

Beyond the settle stood an oblong table, dark, strong and solid, for as the hall is the key-note of the house, everything in it should express dignity and a kind of reserve. To it are admitted strangers, while a sense of freedom and riant cheerfulness is kept for those living-rooms which are open only to friends and intimates. True, a summer cottage may well carry a more informal and jaunty air. But it may not wholly be given up to an informal and open exposition of home life. Let there be some places where our Lares and Penates are sheltered from the gaze of the "wide, wide world."

This table, by the settle, is for floating literature, books, magazines and summer novels. For, of a morning and afternoon, here sit my lady and her friends. Certainly the reception hall is made use of on those days when the piazza is over-heated from the sun. Then, too, how easy to come from a walk, throw one's self down upon the settle and skim over the morning paper.



A German Entrance-Hall.

Across the hall is another table, narrow and long. And our mirror, with hooks and small shelves in place of side cabinets, indicates that it has taken the place of the stiff hat-rack. On either side are brackets, upbearing large, simply-shaped, but exquisite vases of Rookwood pottery. If those are thought to be too ornate for a cottage hall, the plain but artistic grey-green ginger jars take their places. They are always filled with wildflowers and sprays. From the willow tufts of springtime, through the season of apple-blossoms, daisies, clover and cone-flowers, down to golden-rod and flaming maple boughs of autumn, the vases are never empty.

The floor rug, a dark rich, Oriental oblong, on muddy days disappears. Its place is taken by a real country-woven rag carpet. The coloring is rich and varied, as there is no special form or design in the stripes. Made out of new pieces and bits "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," the rag rug is as quaint as could be desired, and as little like the cheap tapestry beloved of the dweller in the front tenement.

As the staircase is rather wide, a landing half-way up proves a veritable coign of vantage. These square landings are most effectual in breaking up stiffness and giving to the hall an air of being cared for and lived in. It is better if the dwelling be small and space necessarily utilized, to have the staircase go up directly from the sitting-room, into which opens the outer door. Especially does such an arrangement suit a summer cottage. Even in an all-round-the-year home, the upper landing may be so enclosed as to keep in heat, while the front door is shielded with a vestibule.

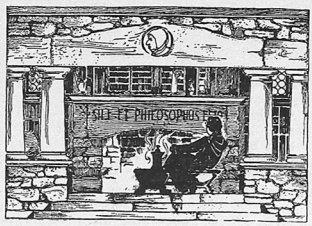
But my lady's is for summer occupancy, and this semi-sitting or reception-room has a doorway invitingly open to sight and sound. And as one enters the glimpse of the landing is one to be recalled with pleasure.

In the corner a broad, low, divan-like seat, simply made of wood finished like the rest of the cottage, is covered with a luxurious stuffed cushion of dull India red denim. The front is incurved so as not to obstruct the passage. Above it, and draped against the wall, is a piece of tapestry that my lady herself painted with a large flat brush, in water colors. As there was no design there were needed no patterns for the hand of a novice. Like the "shadow silks," there were innumerable shades of the dull red and green and brown, lightened at the top into reddish yellow. Over all these shot threads deftly woven in with the needle, of real,—or that which appeared real,—gold thread. They wavered over the surface horizontally in dots and lines, catching and reflecting every glint of light that sought the dreamy half gloom of this restful spot.

This reaches from the seat upward until, at a distance of four feet and a half from the floor, it ends in a mirror. Rather there are two strips of the mirror that are fitted to the angle and held in place by narrow wooden moldings. This seems to uphold a rather long corner bracket Incurved in the centre, like the seat below, it has the same general shape, though much narrower. Over the edge falls a bit of embroidery, home wrought with coarse Asiatic rope silk on the dull red denim. This work, too, follows no set design, but has a species of Oriental richness. The long spider-webby stitches show various shades of amber gold and yellow green. And they, too, enmesh and reflect light that steals in from the vine-wreathed porch.

On the bracket stands a gray-green jar. Always filled with Nature's abundance from the lilies of spring through the season of tulips and star-like cosmos, ferns and catkins, it is a place for deep colored and showy blossoms. From the time they first flowered, my lady loved to fill the vase with the straight, decorative stalks of the hollyhock. The winy red, the shiny sable, the white and buff, how bright and pert they hold themselves in that quaint corner which all visitors think to be the feature of the cottage. In the foot-wide mirror every dancing reflection repeats itself like the gleeful air of a cheery song. And the rich shadings of the tapestry below, with the seat and its cushion, form a fitting base for bracket and its stately burden. The entire corner is subdued, sparkling, harmonious.

At night a brass Moorish lantern with jeweled arches and embrasures, suspended by a brass chain, lights up this attractive place. Its scintillant rays, ruby, green and gold, lend an added charm to a scene alike Americanesque and Oriental.



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